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**The Betrayal of Philosophy
Rediscovering the Self in Plato's *Parmenides***

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Abstract

If we are to understand what it is to become philosophers in the Platonic sense we must not ignore that the central idea of Plato has not been translated.¹ The basic ethical issue is whether or not this betrayal was a deliberate falsification of Plato, or out of ignorance. However, whichever is the case, to repeatedly ignore this most profound idea is tantamount to a betrayal of philosophy itself. The consequence of this betrayal is that readers have been left with a most superficial idea of Platonic philosophy and, likely, have come to the conclusion that philosophy is too abstract and empty of personal references to be taken seriously. We will correct this error by viewing two principle dialogues of Plato with a new appreciation for the simple meaning of a single word. The implications of our review will bring philosophy back as the fundamental challenge of our age, for it is in our time that many seek a personal meaning that is not relative, and can be said to be true since it touches reality.

Keywords: *Plato, Parmenides, The Republic, self, logos, pathologos*

If it is true that a single idea of Plato is not translated, it is important to ask if it is central or fundamental for understanding Plato, and if it is so significant then how does this idea relate to the other central ideas of Plato's philosophy, such as the Good, the Idea of the Good, the Soul, the Logos and the Intelligible realm. Before we discuss this idea, and others, we will not offer an explanation of why this fundamental error has been ignored repeatedly throughout the European tradition of philosophy, because we would rather leave that to you.

We will outline our case with a review of the sixth book of Plato's *Republic* and his dialogue *Parmenides*. It is most appropriate to begin with the sixth book of Plato's *Republic* because this is where he discusses the nature and goals of the philosopher, and it is here that he introduces the idea of the Self (*auto*) (484B7).²

Let us turn to where Socrates discusses the greatest learning of the Good and the Idea of the Good. In this passage Socrates indicates he is reluctant to explain the Good to Glaucon and offers to discuss his alternative, the Idea of the Good, which the Good begat. Glaucon responds that he expects to later hear about the father, the Good. Socrates says, "let us dismiss for now inquiring what in the world the Good Self Is (*estin*)" (506D8) and offers the great study of the Idea of the Good as the means to put to use justice and the other virtues. He adds, "we do not sufficiently know her Self; but if we do not know her Self, then without the knowledge of her Self, even if we knew everything else in the highest degree, you know, that it would be of no benefit to us, just as it would bring us nothing, even though we possessed anything whatever, without the possession of the Good." (505A4) Here we have a contrast between the Self, her Self, and the Good, and we must learn what

that means. As Socrates continues he goes on to say “there are great and manifold many disputes about the Self” (505D3), and gives his view, “in the case of ‘just’ and ‘beautiful’ Selves the many will choose the apparent, even though they are not so, whether in actions or acquisitions or opinions; but yet, on the other hand, when it comes to good Selves, no one is satisfied to acquire those that are apparent, but in Selves, they seek ‘the true Ones,’ for in these everyone immediately despises the apparent.”(505D5)

Yes, there are many selves, but are they members of a higher class, the Self? Is this Self the same as the One? Can we call the Self by the name of One Self? Does the Self disperse itself to bring into existence the many selves? If so, it is functioning as a primogenitor, hence the term ‘herself.’ Consider, he reflects on this very point when he says we must distinguish this point from the vantage point of the Logos, saying, “Surely then, we have spoken about the beautiful Self and the good Self, and in the same way about all Selves, which at that time we considered as many, now again, we shall in turn consider them according to one Idea.” (507B3) Interestingly, he advances the idea about the origin of the Intellect, saying that when the Soul firmly resides in that place in which “Truth and real Being brightly shine, then the Soul comprehends and recognizes the Self and it comes to light that the Soul possesses Intellect, (*nous*)”. (508D5) Socrates then contrasts the cause of knowledge and of truth being beautiful when he says, “but when you are led to think that the Self is ‘another’ and still even more beautiful than these, you are being led to think correctly.” (508E4)

Having taken Glaucon through his Logos he says to him, “You yourself are the cause, for having compelled me to say what appears to be the case concerning the Self.” (509C3) When Glaucon returns to the analogy with the sun, Socrates develops the well known divided line image that positions the cognitive functions—image thinking, believing, understanding, and knowing—with their proper objects. He then discusses how the Soul proceeds from hypotheses to an un-hypothetical beginning, “without those images, and by the ideal Selves, makes her methodical way through their Selves.” (510B7) Thus, the quest of the philosopher ends when Socrates links the Logos, the power of the dialectic, the Intelligible, and the Self, saying, “Moreover, understand by the other section of the Intelligible, I mean this which the Self Logos touches, by the power of dialectics, by making use of hypotheses not as beginnings but really as hypotheses, as if they were stepping stones and climbing ropes, in order that, by proceeding as far as to that which is un-hypothetical, the origin of the all, by coming in contact with her Self, the Self Logos may then in turn keep-holding-on to the Ideas that are maintained by her, that Self Logos may in this way, descend to the end; without making any use of anything sensible, but by the ideal Selves proceeding through of themselves into Selves, and finally terminate its procession in Ideas.” (511B2) Those who are driven to seek goals by mastering things and manipulating others follow a *pathologos*, or a false belief about the Self, and that is the opposite to the true Logos (Grimes & Uliana, 1998, Chapter Two). Socrates shows in the seventh book of *The Republic* the way the pathologos unfolds in the four types of upbringing in families that correspond to the four kinds of political constitutions.

There are, of course, many references to the Self that I have omitted, some fifty that can easily be traced in the sixth book. However, the idea of the Self, the references to the plural selves, the feminine form of self as ‘her Self’, the idea of One Self, and the idea that links together the Self and the Logos as Self Logos are ideas that are explored in Plato’s dialogue *Parmenides*.

It is likely that many readers of *Parmenides* find his dialogue difficult to comprehend, however it is possible that if we add that word Self, or auto, it will gain a new vitality and will be seen as a profound work that while difficult, can be comprehended. If a new translation of these dialogues can surface the power and meaning of the idea of the Self, it will have a place of honor among philosophical works and deserve to be placed high on the list of wisdom works. If we can cite from the new translation where the idea of the Self plays a significant and crucial role it will support our contention of the importance of this idea. Equally, if we cite each hypothesis and its conclusions, it will allow us to test how important and prominent the idea of the Self is in Plato's *Parmenides*.

Let us start with the problem that Socrates is puzzled about. For, after criticizing Zeno's paper he admits to having a certain doubt about the selves being explored in a parallel way with those that Zeno had employed when he said that all things derive their likeness with their class by participating in ideas. While Socrates accepts the idea that all like-things gain their likeness by participating in like-ideas, he is puzzled as to whether selves must be like other ideas and gain their likeness by participating in the general idea of Self. If selves have commonness, they could be a One, but if each is apart from the others, they must be many. How can the same thing be both one and many? He knows that the idea of Self takes many forms, such as the ideal Self, the real Self, the general idea of Self, the masculine and feminine form of Self, themselves and itself, and he wonders how they relate to one another and if they too participate in the ideas to gain their likeness, or if they are one even though they are many. He says that he would be pleased if anyone could solve this puzzle about the Self that "is woven together into the Ideal Selves in a manifold way;" (129E6) and "demonstrate in detail about the Ideals which are defined by the power of the Logos." (129E8)

Parmenides recognizes Socrates' problem "concerning these Selves, whether it is necessary to speak of these, just as we did about those Ideas, or in another way." (130C4) Parmenides then takes Socrates through a series of questions, bringing him to recognize that the Self must be unknown, and that begins the famous master argument that leaves Socrates even more puzzled. In the dialogue that follows Socrates is taken through many puzzles with the use of the idea of Self, and he also links it to the idea of participation and essence. The idea of essence (ousia) is better understood as the power of the mind to turn itself around, as in reflecting and in other cognitive experiences. Indeed, of the over four hundred uses of auto, or Self, in the *Parmenides*, about fifty are employed during Parmenides' examination of Socrates' ideas. Parmenides summarizes his treatment of Socrates' puzzle saying that unless he enters into the study of the dialectic that the truth about these ideas will escape him. At this point it is curious that when Parmenides urges Socrates to study the dialectic, he says, "(you) must collect yourself together", (135D3) and the term he uses for yourself is 'thyself', which, of course, is the honorific use of the pronoun as in Know Thyself.

After Parmenides overcomes his original reluctance to provide his own hypothesis dialectically, he begins what appears to be another curious puzzle. Parmenides introduces his hypothesis saying, "I should begin from myself and the hypothesis of myself, hypothesizing concerning the One Self, whether One Is (*estin*), or whether One Is not, what must the result be?" (137B4) His emphasis on the idea of the Self suggests it is his own personal hypothesis that he will share.

Thus, when Parmenides begins unfolding this idea of the Self in the first hypothesis he links the idea of the One with the idea of the Self. He says, "Well then, if One Is, could not the One be many

in some other way?” (137C2) After he gains Aristoteles’ agreement to this he starts his first conclusion saying, “Accordingly then, neither can any part belong to the Self nor can the Self be a whole.” Aristoteles asks, “Why not?” This begins the twenty-four arguments that are explored. There are twenty-six conclusions about the idea of the Self and seventeen for itself, but within his conclusions there are ten that include brief arguments and a mix of both the idea of the Self and itself. Interestingly, he distinguishes the idea of the Self from the idea of the Same, and from the One, saying, “Accordingly then, the One is never in the Self.” (139A9) For each of the arguments that explore the One, he simply applies it to the Self. In concluding his hypothesis he says, “Accordingly then, neither can it be named, nor spoken of, nor be opined of, nor be the object of knowledge, nor do real Beings have a perception of the Self.” (142A5) Aristoteles simply says, “It is not likely.” Parmenides turns to Aristoteles and asks, “Therefore is it possible that these conclusions have to be in this way about the One?” (142A6), and Aristoteles replies, “To me at least, it certainly does not appear to be in this way.” (142A9)

Clearly Aristoteles follows each point in this dialogue, he agrees to all the arguments about the One, he follows carefully each of the arguments, but when they are applied to the idea of the Self he says that it is not likely.

As a result of Aristoteles’ rejection, Parmenides asks if he would like to see if any other possibility is likely, and Aristoteles replies, “By all means then, I do so wish.” (142B3) Parmenides then takes Aristoteles through the next eight hypotheses, four positive and four negative, so that he can understand in which cognitive levels of reality the Self is described, and which not, and through which level it functions, and in which the false image of the Self appears.

Before Parmenides begins his exploration of the second hypothesis he advances a methodological point about the use of the idea of the Self. He says, “Is it not the case then, that if we say ‘One Is,’ then we must go through the same Logos about these conclusions for the Self, whatever they happen to be, or is that not so?” (142B4). After gaining acceptance of this point he continues with his first argument saying, “See then, from the beginning. Accordingly then, on the one hand, if One Is, then can the Self be such as it is, while on the one hand, it does not participate in Ousia?” (142B8). Again, Parmenides reasons his way through many arguments about the way the One functions, and transfers his conclusions to the idea of Self. His conclusion is a summary statement that brings into a unity what he has demonstrated through following his dialectical method. He says, “Surely then, there can be knowledge, and opinion, and perception of the Self, since we have now dealt with all these aspects concerning the Self.” (155D9) Aristoteles agrees and Parmenides ends saying, “Surely then, there is a name and a Logos to the Self, and so it is named and accounted for; and whatsoever happens to such aspects concerning the other Beings is also the case for the One.” (155D12)

From this conclusion we find Parmenides continues with the third hypothesis. He says, “Surely then in the third place, let us relate that if the One Is such as we have described, is it not necessary that the Self is One and Being and many and neither One nor Being nor many and participates of time, because on the one hand, it Is One, then at that time, it participates of Ousia; but on the other hand, because it Is not, then in turn it does not at that time participate of Ousia.” (155E3)

The third hypothesis explores the One Self functioning through time in respect to the gap that exists between successive moments of change. For, from rest to motion or motion to rest, there is

something instantaneous, the gap, through which all change takes place. Each moment is viewed as static and separate, for what changes from the old into the new gains its next stage from the intelligibility in the gap. When it is in the gap it is One and when it becomes the many it enters into time. The inherent intelligibility of the Self allows providence to unfold through the gap in such a way that every living thing gains what is appropriate to it from the destiny that is most natural and beneficial to it. He concludes the third hypothesis with a summary statement that all his reasoning is according to the Self Logos. (157B) For, as the One functions through Ousia, it exhibits the function of the Logos. So too does the Self's Logos function as the source of the patterns and order behind each moment.

As the second and third hypothesis express that nature of the reality of the Self, so the fourth and fifth express its appearance and its denial. Neither the fourth nor the fifth hypothesis asserts anything positive of the Self. The fourth deals with the One as an appearance and the fifth separates completely the One from the others so that there is no functioning of the Self in the fifth. In the fourth Parmenides introduces the idea of selves and shows it need not be restricted to the plural aspect of the Self, but is used as synonymous with his use of 'the others.' In the fifth hypothesis he says, "If One Is, what must those other than the One experience?" adding, "when the One is separate from the others." (159B7) He concludes, "Accordingly then, there is no other way besides these, in which both the One and the others can subsist in the Self existence." (159C3)

The four negative hypotheses proceed on the assumption that the One Is not, and in none do we find any positive assertion about the existence of the Self. In the sixth he argues through, "What must be the result if the One Is not?" (160B6) However, he adds that we can speak about the non-existence of things and can even know them, much like Mickey Mouse. If the One Is not, then it is reasonable that "this must belong to the Self," and "that there must be knowledge of the Self" since it can be spoken about. The reasoning follows if we say this about Mickey Mouse. For we can have a knowledge of him and say many things about him even though he, like the One, Is not. Since our Mickey can be spoken about he has a mode of existing, while not truly existing, just as the One of this hypothesis is said not to exist. Parmenides argues that the Self too shares in Ousia, though it does not strictly speaking exist, and we can add that we can assign to Mickey Mouse the ability to reflect upon himself. Parmenides brings this together when he says, "Accordingly then, we must affirm from the beginning, what must be, if One Is not, in the following way. Thus, on the one hand, as it is reasonable, this must belong to the Self; first of all, there must be knowledge of the Self, or else, nothing which is said will be known, when anyone says, if One Is not." (160D2)

The seventh hypothesis asks, "What must result in relation to the Self, if One Is not?" (163C1) The subject of this hypothesis can have no mindfulness, or Ousia, and truly "in no way Is". In the prior hypothesis the Self was likened to something non-existing, but here it can be likened to the idea of square circle since it in no way is, or exists, and nothing real is present to it, just as the Self becomes with the absence of the One. Thus, he says, "Most certainly then, neither likeness nor unlikeness, neither in relation to the Self nor in relation to the others, will be with the Self" (164A2). As he gains Aristoteles' agreement he says, "What follows then? Can the other beings be in any way present with the Self, if none can be present with the Self?" Aristoteles agrees saying, "They cannot." In philosophical midwifery false beliefs about the Self are called the *pathologos* (Grimes & Uliana, 1998, Chapter Two). This hypothesis presents the pure form of an idea of the self that has nothing real about it. It is the counterpart of the Logos as a *pathologos*.

The eighth hypothesis starts with “what must happen to the others if One Is not.”(164B6) Parmenides adds to this hypothesis the comment “But if the Logos is about the others, then the others are indeed other. Or, do you not require that both another and the other be applied to the Self?”(163B8) The plural aspect of this hypothesis can be grasped in our earlier image by joining Mickey Mouse with Minnie Mouse, for they here can be likened to the idea of selves. There can be an indefinite number of selves, masses of them since they lack the idea of the One. The single quality they share is that they can appear in many forms and shapes and ways of being, yet they do not have a real mode of existence, but they ultimately derive from the One. In this hypothesis, like the next, there is no direct mention of the Self.

The ninth hypothesis asks “What must then be to those other than the One, if the One Is not?”(165E3). Clearly, here we have a very strict separation of the One and the others, a sharp division between them that leaves each alone and by itself. Again, the image that can describe this hypothesis is emptiness, for without the One there would be nothing, not even others. He says, “For if none of them (autwn, or the selves) are one, then all of them are nothing, so that neither can many exist.”(165E5)

The final conclusion of Parmenides’ hypotheses is a grand summary and it includes the Self. He says, “Now then, let this be affirmed by you and me; and we may add this also: That if One Is, or Is not, then as it is likely, both in relation to the Self and in relation to the others, and also in relation to themselves and to each other, that all exists in every way, and also all do not exist in every way, and appear to be, and also, do not appear to be,”(166C3).

Reading the *Parmenides* in this way we can understand how Parmenides dealt with Socrates’ puzzle with the ideas of Self. In a similar way, in the first hypothesis Parmenides dealt with Aristoteles’ rejection of the idea of the Self by bringing him along the way of the Logos of the dialectic. The rethinking of these dialogues with an emphasis upon the Self connects Platonic thought firmly to the tradition of the Delphic Oracle’s “Know Thyself,” and in so doing it revitalizes and shows the universal concern for the Self as the most profound object of study.

Notes

1. In 2012 The Noetic Society, Inc. formed a study group to explore Plato’s *Parmenides*, and while Pierre Grimes lead the group, it was the groups’ interaction that surfaced many of these ideas. The initially small group studied together three times a week and included Barbara Stecker, David Coe, and Regina Uliana. As time went on other Noetic Society members joined the group, some regularly and some less frequently. A continuous study of Juan and Maria Balboa’s translation of *Parmenides* and the sixth book of *The Republic* brought a deeper level of insight to the group, and the reflection and exchanges between the group and the Balboa’s added an additional important level to their translation. Pierre’s work, *The Challenge of Plato’s Parmenides: to know Thy Self by way of the dialectic*, scheduled for publication in the fall of 2016, explores in greater depth the above paper, *The Betrayal*.

2. In classical Greek the word for Self “auto” has four forms: Self, same, itself, and the honorific form as Thy Self. All of these forms can signify male and female, itself and themselves, and same and thy. When it expresses the idea of self it does not need an article, as does the idea of same; when it is compounded by an *epsilon* it becomes itself or themselves, and when compounded with *se*, it becomes the word thyself. However, *sautou* can be used (*vide*) and it refers to *seatou*.

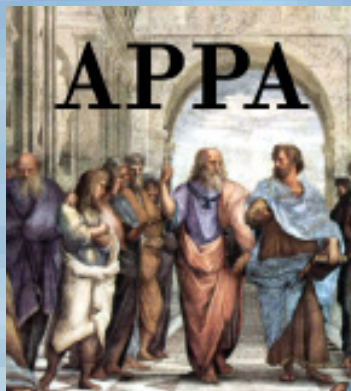
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Pierre Grimes, Ph.D., is the founder of the philosophical midwifery movement, which is an adaptation of Socratic midwifery, and is a mode of philosophical counseling. The name "Philosophical Midwifery" comes from Plato's dialogue, *The Theaetetus*. The Noetic Society was founded in Huntington Beach in 1967 for the study of dialogue and the exploration of the dialectic. When the Noetic Society was incorporated in 1978, Pierre became the Director of its Philosophical Midwifery Program, where he demonstrated and taught the art of philosophical midwifery. Pierre has authored numerous publications and lectures, and is a Director of APPA.





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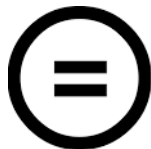
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